



Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agriculture Information Network

Voluntary Report - public distribution

Date: 9/16/2002

GAIN Report #RP2066

Philippines

Biotechnology

Training Needs Assessment of Biotechnology

Regulators Completed

2002

Approved by:

Michael D. Woolsey

US Embassy

Prepared by:

Perfecto G. Corpuz

Report Highlights:

To ensure smooth implementation of new Philippine regulations governing the importation and use of genetically modified (GM) plants and plant products, Post and TIP/FID/ICD organized a highly successful training needs assessment of Philippine regulators by a U.S. biotech expert. The assessment resulted in a number of concrete recommendations designed to build capacity and prevent disruptions to trade in U.S. foods containing GM plant products, worth more than \$400 million per year. The regulations become effective in June, 2003.

Includes PSD changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Manila [RP1], RP

The signing of Administrative Order No.8 (AO 8) Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Q. Montemayor last April 3, 2002 makes the Philippines the first country in Southeast Asia with commercialization guidelines for genetically engineered plants and plant products (refer to RP2018). Implementation of these guidelines will fall to four regulatory agencies under the DA. The lead agency will be the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI). With lesser but still critical roles are the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI), the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Product Standards (BAFPS), and the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority (FPA). AO 8 provides for a transition period wherein the new procedures take effect on June 30, 2003.

Upon the request by Post, Dr. Edward E. Debus, a consultant and an expert in biotechnology regulatory systems was provided by the TIP/FID/ICD/FAS/USDA to conduct a 2-week training needs assessment for the regulatory agencies involved. The first week commenced with a briefing by the regulatory expert to DA Assistant Secretary Segfredo Serrano for Policy and Planning and the various agency heads. The rest of the week was devoted to one on one meetings with the key personnel of the various agencies directly involved with the implementation of AO 8. This proved to be very informative relative to the training needs of the local regulators as well as the overall organizational structure of the regulatory system. It likewise gave an insight as to the degree of complexity the decision making process would be under AO 8.

The second week was devoted to a trip to PHILRICE, a premier research institution currently involved in GM-rice field trials North of Manila and in the observation of a DA educational outreach effort regarding the commercialization guidelines in the southern island of Cebu. Both the PHILRICE trip and the Cebu educational drive provided the consultant a feel on how public perception was influenced by several interest groups. Another visit was arranged, this time to the National Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology (NIMBB), the South East Asia Regional Council for Agriculture-Biotechnology Information Unit (SEARCA-BIC) and the Institute of Plant Breeding (IPB) all located within the University of the Philippines at Los Banos (UPLB) compound. The visit focused on the status of where local agricultural biotechnology research was and provided the consultant a feel for the enthusiasm of the local scientific community in relation to the commercialization of their respective agricultural biotechnology researches. The SEARCA-BIC meeting touched on the need for an information secretariat and the need to get the right information out to the public.

The visit was capped by a presentation to Assistant Secretary Serrano, the various agency heads and the corresponding key personnel tasked to implement AO 8. The presentation started with a discussion by Mr. Steven Beasley from FAS/Washington of USDA's priorities relative to agricultural biotechnology as well as the various USDA programs that supported these priorities. This was followed by a very informal discussion on the training needs findings and other recommendations by Dr. Debus.